

the Acorn

www.saltspringconservancy.ca

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The Newsletter of the Salt Spring Island Conservancy

SPRING 2017

gen·er·os·i·ty | noun | 1. the quality of being kind and generous.



"In the late 1980s, my husband and I purchased a 5-acre parcel of land adjacent to Blackburn Lake. Following my husband's death in 2000, it became increasingly difficult for me to protect the property from squatting, vandalism, and the consequent threat of fire.

"When the adjacent golf course evolved to become the Blackburn Lake Nature Reserve and the new home of the Salt Spring Island Conservancy, it became apparent to me that donating the land to the Conservancy would be a win-win solution: the land would be preserved, protected, and maintained to the highest standard; I would no longer have the worry of its welfare; and, last but not least, it would provide me with a substantial tax benefit. I am happy to know that this land is now in the very good hands of the Conservancy for all to enjoy!"

— An anonymous donor

Kindness and generosity

This morning, the sun is glinting off long icicles hanging from the roof. The world is so utterly bright and beautiful, as the light glimmers from each snowflake and transforms Long Harbour into a blinding mirror of light. This morning, I feel immensely grateful to be healthy and alive, to be doing good work, and to be reflecting on kindness and generosity.

The wisest advice my dear mother once gave me was this: “Be good to each other.” She said this repeatedly, a distillation of 90+ years of many good times and hard times. Often I am reminded of her advice, as I go about my work, where I frequently experience that “being good to each other” in gestures of kindness and generosity.

I am so grateful for the kindness prevalent in the Conservancy community. And it is indeed a community—people working together to protect the island’s land, waters and wildlife, permanently protecting places for nature to thrive and people to enjoy.

Our beautiful Blackburn building was an incredible gift by a generous donor, with support from the builder, contractor, construction crew and volunteers. Christmas 2014 was unforgettable, when a knock at the door revealed an offer for a permanent home for the Conservancy. We are always grateful for this amazing, anonymous act of generosity.

Recently, a longtime supporter donated about 150 Garry oaks that he lovingly tended, some for 20 years. These little trees are from acorns gathered under Burgoyne and Tuam oaks and will become a demonstration Garry oak grove at Blackburn, celebrating Canada’s 150th. Thank you, Paul Linton!

Today, I continue working to realize a landowner’s dream for a Conservancy nature reserve in



Photo: Rodney Polden

memory of a spouse. This generous gift could fill the donor’s pockets, but instead will be a refuge for nature and future generations.

In 2016, over 100 Conservancy volunteers gathered and planted seeds and cuttings for restoration projects, helped students learn about nature, cut broom and mapped key conservation lands, devoted many hours to board guidance of the organization, took countless, beautiful photographs and more. So many were generous with their time, and we deeply appreciate it.

Over 300 members and another 300 donors contribute annually to keep the Conservancy afloat, and some donate land or covenants. Today, a longtime member named the Conservancy in her will. And almost a dozen grantors support our work, particularly to protect rare species and their habitats.

Particularly these days, when too much of the world seems gripped by fear and selfishness, the practice of kindness and generosity is both an antithesis and an antidote. Here on Salt Spring, the Conservancy is a refuge of kindness and generosity. I am heartened by this living reminder of my mother’s wise words and sincerely thank everyone.

—Christine Torgrimson, Executive Director

Partners in business

Since founded 22 years ago, the Conservancy has enjoyed a vital relationship with other Salt Spring businesses. Our conservation business includes owning and managing seven nature reserves, working with landowners to take good care of the island, helping children and adults learn about nature, employing five staff and a cadre of consultants, and purchasing many supplies and services.

Thrifty Foods and Country Grocer (formerly Ganges Village Market) have long helped support our Stewards in Training program. Over the years, Slegg Building Materials and Windsor Plywood have given us generous discounts on supplies. Salt Spring Books has supported our event ticket sales and promoted our presenters.

Linwood Custom Homes, Inc. contributed a hefty discount on the Blackburn building package, and Green City Builders donated

some of their costs, including labour for our solar system, and they continue to be strong supporters of the Conservancy. Salt Spring Coffee often donates coffee for our events.

In 2017, eight businesses joined our budding 1% for Salt Spring Wild Places program, donating some business proceeds to the Conservancy and encouraging customers to follow their example. They are helping us build a program with great future promise. These founders include Armand Heights B&B, Gatehouse Lodge B&B, Hedgerow House B&B, Highgarden B&B, Salt Spring Carriage House B&B, Sunnyside Guest Suite, Sunset Solace Cottage and Wisteria Guest House.

Many thanks to all of these and other partners in business! Conservation is good for the island, and a well-conserved island is good for business.

Please help Fraser's

The Conservancy always supports local businesses first, and one key local provider is Fraser's Thimble Farms, an important source of native plants for private landowners and for the Conservancy's nature reserve restoration efforts.

Fraser's is facing some daunting challenges related to water costs.

A community fundraising campaign has sprung up to help them capture more rainwater, reduce their water costs and stay in business.

You can contribute by writing a cheque to "Thimble Farms Rainwater Storage Fund" and depositing it into trust account #2555746 at Island Savings Credit Union.

Blackburn's wetlands are returning



Photos: bottom left – Simon Henson,
Top and Bottom Right – Laura Matthias

Last fall, the Conservancy and dedicated volunteers restored three wetlands and almost an acre of habitat. This project was the third year of wetland restoration at Blackburn Lake Nature Reserve. The reserve protects two-thirds of the lake's waterfront and is home to 22 Species at Risk, including Barn Swallows, Little Brown Myotis (bat) and the freshwater Swamp Fingernailclam.

The reserve is in the Coastal Douglas-fir biogeoclimatic zone. Only 0.5% of undisturbed old forest remains intact in this zone, and wetlands are especially rare. Since so little remains, it is important to restore damaged places in addition to protecting what is left.

Restoration planning began in 2014 when Tom Biebighauser, renowned wetland restoration expert from Kentucky, explained how the reserve had been drained, ditched and flattened to create the former golf course. These changes speed up water flow, increase erosion and allow sediments to move into the lake, which can impact water quality. The non-native grasses on the fairways create poor habitat for native plants and animals.

In 2016, the Conservancy spent months getting permits, growing plants, collecting seeds and organizing the project. In September, under Tom's guidance, a Caterpillar 320 excavator removed buried drain lines and an irrigation system. Wetland pools were created, invasive species were removed, and woody debris and rocks were placed in the wetlands to provide basking sites and hiding places for animals.

Volunteers sprang into action to help mulch with weed-free straw to limit the growth of weeds and protect the bare soil from erosion. Volunteers sowed seeds from 14 different wetland plants that had been collected from the reserve in the summer. Other volunteers planted trees, shrubs and wildflowers in the upland pollinator gardens and wetland plants in the lower areas. Overall, about 7,000 plants were planted in just two days!

Without Salt Spring Island's volunteers who devoted about 200 hours to this project, and the generous support of many funders, this restoration work would not have been possible.

Funders for this work included: **Government of Canada's National Wetland Conservation Fund, Wildlife Habitat Canada, Pacific Salmon Foundation and Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation.**

Salt Spring's three rare owls



Photos: Jared Hobbs

Salt Spring Island is home to three rare owls: the Barn Owl, the Northern Pygmy-owl and the Western Screech-owl. Barn Owl populations appear to have dropped on Salt Spring since the large snowfall of 2009, as deep snow impedes their ability to hunt, which can lead to starvation. They also have a short lifespan in the wild (less than 4 years), hampering the ability for populations to rebound.

Barn Owls are useful to have around, especially as 75% of their diet is mice. They roost in cavities and need large dead trees to live in where old,

open barns aren't available. They often use barn owl boxes where available. Their call is quite distinctive—a long hissing shriek!

Northern Pygmy-owls and Western Screech-owls face population declines. These small owls nest in cavities and compete for habitat with the thriving, more generalist Barred Owl. The tiny Northern Pygmy-owl preys on small birds such as wrens and jays, whereas the Western Screech-owl eats small mammals, birds, fish, amphibians and invertebrates. The common Barred Owl preys on these two rare, smaller owls and may compete with them for their nesting sites.

You can help owls survive the winter

At this time of year, cavity-nesting owls are snuggled into their crevice homes waiting for their breeding season.

- Avoid cutting down old or dead trees at this time of year. If you can wait, do your trimming in the fall.
- Avoid using rodenticides, as owls prey predominantly on small mammals. A single adult rat can contain many times the lethal dose of a rodenticide because the poisons work slowly and depend on multiple ingestions.
- Collect poisoned rats and dispose of them in secure trashcans. Learn more: <http://npic.orst.edu/factsheets/rodenticides.html>

This February and March, we're doing our annual nocturnal owl surveys and hope to hear some of these rare owls. You can listen to these owl calls on our website: Protect / Rare Species & Ecosystems / Species at Risk / Birds. If you hear or see one of the island's rare owls, please call us at 250/538-0318.

SSIC welcomes newest landowners to sign stewardship agreement



The Conservancy's voluntary Stewardship Agreement program works to encourage and engage landowners in stewardship of their lands. With almost 75% of the island

in private ownership, private landowners play an important role in caring for Salt Spring Island. The Conservancy welcomes Rick and Juliette Laing to the program.

"Juliette and I grew up on the West Coast to working class families who cooked, canned and gardened. We met 41 years ago when I, as an Able Seaman, joined the small cruise ship 'Princess Patricia' on the Vancouver to Skagway run and where Juliette was working as Able Hairdresser. Many ships and certificates later (including Master Mariner in 1980), I was bitten by the back-to-the-land and owner-builder

bug, and we moved to our 10-acre vacant (and logged) Wilkie Way property in 1983, with a 3-week-old son, a bit of savings, some building/gardening books and a big-time work ethic. Thirty-three years later we are still both self-employed, grow and preserve our vegetables and fruit and do our best to live a fit, self-sufficient, sustainable lifestyle with full respect for the flora and fauna around us.

"We have been involved in many environmental and social issues over the decades, but the major fight to preserve the Carmanah Valley and my 7 years designing, building and operating the SS Recycling Depot in the late 80s and early 90s do stand out. We have been members of the Conservancy since the beginning, and in the true spirit of a treehugger who has the skills to always provide our own firewood, I have as Warden, cleared windfalls and brush from the Erskine/Manzanita trails for years."

—Rick Laing

Rare and valuable: Macoun's Meadowfoam

Macoun's Meadowfoam (*Limnanthes macounii*) is a small winter annual that is a federally threatened species found on Salt Spring Island in only one known location. This plant is low-growing with white flowers and prefers to grow next to the ocean where there are wet seepage areas in the winter that dry out in the summer. Truly a mild-winter plant, the seeds germinate during the heavy rains of October and depend on the mild maritime climate that is found on the Gulf Islands. It flowers in March and dies back in June. It is usually self-pollinated, as most insects have not emerged in time for the flowering period, and produces three to four little seeds that look like nutlets.



Photos: Laura Matthias

Its main threats are habitat loss and encroachment by invasive species such as Carpet burweed (*Soliva sessilis*). It is localized only to southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, and known populations fluctuate greatly each year.

You can help the success of this rare plant by supporting the Conservancy's work to monitor the local population on Salt Spring Island.

LEARN MORE

http://www.goert.ca/documents/SAR_manual/Limnanthes_macounii.pdf
http://www.registrelp-sararegistry.gc.ca/species/speciesDetails_e.cfm?sid=259

Leave a legacy for nature

You have a great deal to think about when asked, "Would you be willing to support my charity with a legacy gift?" Gosh! That sounds easier said than done! Well, it can be easy, once you make up your mind. There are many different ways to support a charity with legacy gifts.

Organizing your will can feel like a relief at any age and adding a planned gift to benefit future generations can increase that feeling. When

reviewing your will, you can add a charity such as the Conservancy as a beneficiary. You can leave a lump sum or a percentage of the residual after your family is taken care of.

The correct legal name of a beneficiary is crucial, so please have your lawyer or financial adviser double check the charity's legal name. It is also important to leave the gift as a general donation, without written restrictions, because if a charity dissolves or a program ends, then the gift

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\$50 \$500 \$5000
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Tax receipts will be provided for donations of \$20 or more.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

could be returned to the estate. If you add the Conservancy, let us know! It allows us to thank you properly, and who doesn't like that?

In 2007, 7% of Canadians left a planned gift in their will. That year, Canadians made \$10 billion worth of charitable donations, but in 2011, only \$8.3 billion. Environmental organizations received 2% of those donations. Considering that future generations require a healthy environment, this needs to change. Please help us to improve that statistic.

The globally rare Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem covers 75% of Salt Spring Island. Therefore, we've made it our mission to acquire and manage ecologically valuable land to help ensure the survival of at-risk species and diverse ecosystems on Salt Spring.



If you can plan ahead a little and leave a lasting gift, you'll make a real difference to our climate, our biodiversity and our beautiful habitat and wild places. Please consider saying, "Yes! I want to leave a legacy!"

LEGACY GIFT

<http://leavealegacyvancouver.com/statistics-on-giving/>
<https://www.legalwills.ca/blog/planned-giving-state-charitable-bequests-canada/>

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